



# MOUNTAIN BROOK FIRE DEPARTMENT

POLICY NO. 105.02 VOLUME: 1

SUBJECT: Radio Communications and Dispatch Procedures

SIGNED: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: 7/6/2016 - revised  
Chris J. Mullins, Fire Chief

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of this document is to provide a standardized format for the operation of Fire and Emergency Medical Communications in the City of Mountain Brook.

**POLICY:** All personnel shall abide by the procedure contained herein when communicating over the departmental radio system.

**OBJECTIVE:**

To specifically cover the following areas:

1. General procedural guidelines.
2. Dispatch of apparatus.
3. Routine and emergency communications with mobile radio units.
4. Command communications.

**FCC INFORMATION:**

Licensing and Ownership

1. The City of Mountain Brook is the licensee for all radio frequencies and radio equipment operated at the Police/Fire Communications Center.
2. Frequency assignments:
  - a. Channel 1 (153.770 MHz) shall normally be used as primary dispatch frequency for all units.
  - b. Channel 2 (154.370 MHz) shall be used as the secondary frequency (talk-around). It may be used for the controlling of a working incident, or as requested by field units and/or as directed by the dispatcher.

**NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION STANDARD 1221:**

The dispatch standards outlined in NFPA 1221 (see appendix Z) will be the standards set for the dispatch of fire and emergency medical services in the City of Mountain Brook.

Transmission Procedure

1. The Communications center shall be referred to as "Fire Alarm" both by units and dispatch.

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## PROCEDURES:

### A. Incident Dispatch

#### 1. Specific information

- a. Determine location first.
- b. Determine nature of call.
  1. Structure Fire – If there are people inside, advise the caller to get everyone out of structure, if possible.
  2. Vehicle Fire – Type of vehicle, if inside a structure, and the type of cargo (if applicable).
  3. Natural Gas Leak – Determine if the leak is inside structure or outside. Advise the caller not to hang up the phone and not to activate any electrical switches, but to have everyone leave the building (if the leak is inside the structure).  
Notify gas dept.
  4. Vehicle Accident – Determine if the vehicle is on fire, number of injuries, if anyone is trapped.
  5. Emergency Medical Call – Use the Emergency Medical Dispatch protocols as trained.

**NOTE: ALWAYS SEND A FIRE DEPARTMENT UNIT TO INVESTIGATE. NEVER MAKE ASSESSMENTS OVER THE PHONE. IF THE CALLER REPORTS THAT THE FIRE IS OUT, LET ALL APPARATUS CONTINUE UNTIL THE FIRST UNIT ON THE SCENE IS ABLE TO ASSESS THE SITUATION. ADVISE THE CALLER THAT A COMPANY WILL BE RESPONDING TO MAKE A REPORT ON THE INCIDENT. IN THE EVENT THERE IS CONFUSION ABOUT AN ADDRESS, A TRACE SHOULD BE INITIATED. WHEN TRACE RESULTS ARE RECEIVED, RESPOND A COMPANY TO THE TRACED ADDRESS TO INVESTIGATE. IF THE TRACE COMES BACK TO ANOTHER JURISDICTION, CONTACT THAT AGENCY AND HAVE THEM INVESTIGATE.**

#### 2. Documentation

- a. Time “marks” shall be made in the CAD time system when:
  1. The call is received.
  2. The call is dispatched.
  3. The first unit and other units designate responding.
  4. The first unit and other units arrive.
  5. Units go in-service.
  6. Transport Unit reports en route to hospital.
  7. Transport Unit reports out at hospital.
  8. Transport Unit reports in-service (complete)
  9. Command reports “fire under control.”
  10. Utilities are reported on the scene.
  11. Other “marks” as the Incident Commander may request.

#### 3. Determining the response

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- a. Response of closest fire apparatus:
  1. The closest piece of fire apparatus shall be dispatched to an incident.

**NOTE: IF COMPANIES THAT ARE "ON THE AIR": ARE ACTUALLY CLOSER TO THE CALL THAN THE COMPANY DISPATCHED, THEY WILL NOTIFY FIRE ALARM OF THEIR LOCATION AND THEY WILL RESPOND UNLESS OTHERWISE DIRECTED BY FIRE ALARM.**

4. Dispatching the incident (Each dispatch will be transmitted at least three times).
  - a. Sound a short alert tone (2-3 seconds).
  - b. Announce company (ies), units, due to respond in the order they are due.
  - c. Announce location of incident (to include building name and/or cross street if applicable).
  - d. Announce type of incident (a house fire, vehicle fire, medical call, etc.).
  - e. Repeat b, c, and d two more times after original.
  - f. Announce company (ies), units to respond.
  - g. Announce location of incident (to include building name and/or cross street if applicable).
  - h. Announce type of incident with additional information on hand.
  - i. Report units responding as they report they are responding.
  - j. If there is no en route response after 2 minutes, establish radio contact with the first due unit and/or contact the stations via the fire phone.
5. Classification of Alarms
  - a. Regular Alarms – (Two Engines, Truck and Command Vehicle)
    1. Any fire within a structure, including chimney fires.
    2. Any fire adjacent to or threatening a structure.
    3. Any alarm device sounding in a structure or reporting through an alarm company.
    4. Any hazardous material incident.
    5. Building collapse.
    6. A gas leak (natural, butane, propane, etc.).
    7. Odor of smoke in a structure.
    8. Anytime the Shift Commander feels that the call needs a full response.
    9. Flooded basement with fire and/or life hazard.
    10. Lockout with food on stove, fire and/or life hazard.
  - b. Single Company Alarms (One Unit)
    1. Vehicle fires. (Engine)
    2. Automobile accidents no injuries confirmed. (Engine)
    3. Investigations
    4. Emergency service calls (wires down, etc.).

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5. Details (wash, water, etc.).
  6. Brush or grass fires (unless structure endangered then full response).
  7. Medical assists (Not EMS).
  8. Tree fire.
  9. Utility shut off.
  10. Elevator emergencies (unless fire is involved then it will be a regular alarm).
  11. Lockout with children inside.
- c. Emergency Medical Services
1. **Tier One:** Two Engine Companies, Transport Unit, Command Vehicle  
Cardiac Arrest                      Stroke                                      Unconscious Pt.  
Violent Pt.                              Multiple Pt's.                              MVA with injuries  
Severe Bleeding                      Pt. not breathing                              Unknown medical
  2. **Tier Two:** One Engine Company, Transport Unit, Command Vehicle  
Fall w/ minor injury                      Labor/childbirth                              Fractures  
Cuts/abrasions                              Check person (stable)                              Chest Pain (stable)  
Single patient (minor medical)    Difficulty breathing (talking)

**Note:** When dispatching units to a medical event that involves gunshots fired (whether homicide or suicide), the police department will be dispatched as well and relevant information will be given to the units responding (the PD needs to secure the scene before entry is made by paramedics – safety!).

## 6. Dispatch/Radio Transmissions

- a. Single Company alarm example:

Tone out "Beep"

Fire Alarm: "Engine 1, #54 Church Street, a dumpster fire; Engine 1, #54 Church Street, a dumpster fire; Engine 1, #54 Church Street, a dumpster fire."

RE-TRANSMIT:

Fire Alarm: "Engine 1, #54 Church Street, a dumpster fire in the alley behind the police building."

- b. Regular Alarm Example:

Tone out "Beep"

Fire Alarm: "Engines 1, 2, Ladder 1, Battalion 1, #56 Church Street, a structure fire; Engines 1, 2, Ladder 1, Battalion 1, #56 Church Street, a structure fire; Engines 1, 2, Ladder 1, Battalion 1, #56 Church Street, a structure fire."

RE-TRANSMIT:

Fire Alarm: "Engines 1, 2, Ladder 1, Battalion 1, #56 Church Street, a structure fire, this will be City Hall, a fire in the copy room."

UNITS SIGNING ON THE AIR FOR ALL RESPONSES: "Engine One

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responding;" "Engine Two responding;" "Battalion 1 responding;" "Ladder One responding."

7. Reporting on the scene: The Incident Command Procedures shall be used on all multiple unit dispatches. Single unit responses will not establish command and will retain their unit designation.
  - a. An on scene report shall be given by the first unit arriving and shall consist of:
    1. Unit number and "on the scene."
    2. Height of building in stories.
    3. Type of building (dwelling, apartment, commercial, hospital, etc.).
    4. Conditions (nothing showing, light smoke showing and the location of such).
    5. Unit Assuming Command and establishing <street name> /command.  
Example: Eng. 1: "Engine 1 on the scene of a 2 story frame residence, nothing showing, Engine 1 is Montclair command."  
Fire Alarm: "Engine 1 on the scene of a 2 story frame residence, nothing showing, Engine 1 is Montclair Command."

**NOTE: FIRE ALARM WILL REPEAT THE ON SCENE REPORT AS STATED. OTHER UNITS ARRIVING WILL WAIT UNTIL AFTER FIRE ALARM HAS REPEATED FIRST UNIT'S ON SCENE REPORT BEFORE MARKING ON THE SCENE. "ENGINE 3 ON THE SCENE." "LADDER 1 ON THE SCENE."**

8. Command Progression – The next higher ranking officer may assume command upon his/her arrival and shall announce this assumption of command.
  - a. Example:  
Battalion 1: "Battalion 1 on the scene, assuming Montclair command."  
NOTE: THE MESSAGE OF COMMAND ASSUMPTION SHALL BE RETRANSMITTED BY FIRE ALARM.  
Fire Alarm: "Battalion 1 on the scene... (location), assuming Montclair command."
  - b. "Command" is the only individual who will communicate with Fire Alarm.
  - c. All communications with Fire Alarm shall be on Channel 1.
9. Situation Report – As soon as possible, the Incident Commander shall make a report to Fire Alarm updating the situation.
10. Emergency Message (May Day for firefighter down, lost or trapped) – anytime a unit is in distress and/or needs to communicate a life threatening message they will use the Emergency Message process.
  - a. Emergency messages are restricted to emergencies where life or personal injury is at stake, or critical situations requiring immediate assistance.
  - b. Emergency messages will be given priority over all other phone or radio traffic and will be immediately acknowledged.  
Example: "Engine 2 to Command – **EMERGENCY** repeat **EMERGENCY.**"

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## 11. Use of Apparatus Air Horns

- a. Emergency/Immediate Evacuation: multiple short apparatus air horn blasts lasting (15-20 seconds).
- b. Open hydrant: two (2) short apparatus air horn blasts lasting (2-3 seconds).
- c. Close hydrant: three (3) short apparatus air horn blasts lasting (2-3 seconds).

## 12. Use of Alert Tones

- a. Alert tones are used to gain the attention of personnel or a station. Alert tones are only used during an incident or radio test times.
- b. One short alert tone (2-3 seconds) shall precede incident dispatches.
- c. May Day message: Three tone-outs (2 seconds each) shall be used to announce building collapse, fire fighter lost, fire fighter trapped, etc. Upon transmission of this tone ALL TRANSMISSIONS ARE TO CEASE AND EVERYONE IS TO LISTEN TO THE MESSAGE.

## 13. Calling for Additional Units – When units are contacting Fire Alarm for additional equipment, standby for Fire Alarm to acknowledge. Then give the message for assistance. Make the request specific.

Example:

Battalion 1: "Battalion 1 to Fire Alarm."

Fire Alarm: "Go ahead Battalion 1."

Battalion 1: "Send me another engine company."

Fire Alarm: "Battalion 1 requests another engine company, fire alarm received."

## 14. Walk-ins/Still Alarms: On occasion a station may receive a call by either landline or walk-in. In this case, the unit should respond to the incident and inform fire alarm by radio if the alarm is away from the station or by telephone if in the station.

Example:

Unit: "Engine 3 to Fire Alarm, we are responding to Old Leeds Road and Brookwood Road on a motor vehicle accident reported by a citizen. Engine 3 requests a Tier One Medical response."

Fire Alarm: Tone out "Beep" – Engine 2, Transport 2, Battalion 1, pick up a still alarm with Engine 3 to Old Leeds Road and Brookwood Road on a wreck with injuries."

Fire Alarm: "Engine 3 responding."

## 15. Mutual Aid/Disaster Assistance Calls – On an mutual aid calls to surrounding jurisdictions, that jurisdiction's dispatcher will be asked as to the location, nature of call, and what unit type will be needed (i.e. Engine Company, Truck Company, Ambulance). Fire Alarm will contact Battalion 1 for a decision with respect to the deployment of the requested resources. All radio dispatches to responding units will include the fact that the call is mutual aid.

## 16. Placing Units In/Out of Service – Whenever a station places any apparatus in/out of service,

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Fire Alarm is to be notified immediately. Unit number and reason will be stated via radio by Fire Alarm for other units to note: Fire Alarm: "Engine 1 out of service mechanical problem" or "Engine 1 in service from mechanical problem."

## 17. Paging of Personnel

- a. The paging of individuals for personal matters will not be done, except in cases of emergency.
- b. Any problems or complaints should be referred to the on-duty Shift Commander.

## **BASIC RULES FOR VOICE OPERATION & MOBILE COMMUNICATIONS:**

- A. Make certain the channel is clear and organize your thoughts before transmitting.
- B. Keep all transmissions brief and to the point.
- C. Speak distinctly and pronounce words carefully.
- D. Depress the microphone switch fully and pause a moment before starting to talk. Talk at conversational level, DO NOT SHOUT.
- E. Use official titles, authorized units, and complete designations, (i.e. Captain Smith, Transport 2, Truck 1, etc.). Broadcasts of first names is not permitted. Cursing is not permitted.
- F. The use of "10 Signals" is not permitted.
- G. Remain calm during all radio and telephone conversations. Avoid uncivil, angry, abusive, derogatory, or sarcastic remarks.
- H. The word "Received" will be used to signify acknowledgement, (i.e. That the message is understood and will be followed). The code signal "10-4" will not be used.  
Example:  
Fire Alarm: "Fire Alarm to Engine 3, we do not have a call-back number for this address."  
Engine 3: "Engine 3 received."
- I. Mobile radio units will use complete identification designations for all transmissions made by the unit.  
Example:  
"Engine 2, Ladder 1, etc."
- J. Hand held radio units will use designations which identify with the apparatus to which assigned, for example: 11-14 for Engine 1 where 11 is Engine 1 Lt., 12 is Engine 1 AO, 13 is Engine 1 Nozzleman, and 14 is Engine 1 Plugman. L1-L4 for Ladder 1, 21-24 for Engine 2, and 31-34 for Engine 3. Battalion 1 and Transports will retain their current call signs.
- K. Fire Alarm shall comply with all orders issued by commanding officers of the fire department while operating on the fireground.
- L. Fire Alarm will only accept orders from the Incident Commander. When orders or instructions are given to Fire Alarm by personnel other than the IC, Fire Alarm will inform that person of the IC and direct that traffic to the IC.

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Example: Unit: "Engine 2 to Fire Alarm, all units can go in-service."

Fire Alarm: "Engine 2, Battalion 1 has assumed command; please direct your message to him."

## STANDARD AUTHORIZED WORDS/PHRASES:

- A. Advise – Give this message to – or provide me with the necessary information.
- B. Brush Unit – Vehicle used for brush/wood fires.
- C. Command Post – The physical location (area/vehicle) of the fireground or incident commander.
- D. Cross Street – The street that intersects before the block of the incident.
- E. Engine – A mobile Engine usually carrying 500 gallons or more with 3 persons on apparatus.
- F. En Route - On the way to... (location).
- G. ETA – Abbreviation for estimated time of arrival.
- H. Landline – A telephone; also to be used as a request to call by telephone.
- I. Out-of-Service – Not available for response.
- J. Move-up – Moving to another station or filling in for another station.
- K. On the Air – Way to notify Fire Alarm that a unit is available by radio.
- L. On the Scene – Indicates that a unit has arrived at its destination.
- M. In-Service – Available for response.
- N. Responding – A unit is on the way to a specific destination.
- O. Response Check – Fire Alarm is questioning the response of a unit.
- P. Situation Status – Status report of incident.
- Q. Situation Under Control – Signifies that the emergency still exists but conditions are under control.
- R. Test Count – For test purposes, a 5 count will be made, 1 to 5, 5 to 1.
- S. Verify – Verify entire message and correct if necessary.
- T. Walkie Talkie – radio designation for hand held radios.

## RADIO TESTING:

- A. Standard testing of radios shall be conducted daily at 0700 hours.
- B. Alert tones are to be used.
- C. If an incident is in progress at 0700, the radio test will be suspended to the following day.
- D. If a radio fails the morning test, it shall be take out-of-service immediately.

## FIRE PHONE TESTING:

- A. Fire Phone tests shall be conducted daily at 1900 hours. Fire Alarm will call each station at 1900 hours and state that this is a phone test. Each fire station will state their station number as a response.
- B. Any fire phones not functioning properly shall be reported through the proper channels.

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## UNIT DESIGNATIONS:

The following (in bold) are the unit designations that will be used by department personnel and Fire Alarm dispatchers.

Fire Chief – <b>Chief 1</b>	<b>Engine 1</b>	<b>Transport 1</b>
Fire Marshal – <b>Fire Marshal</b>	<b>Engine 2</b>	<b>Transport 2</b>
Training/Safety Officer – <b>Safety 1</b>	<b>Engine 3</b>	<b>Transport 3</b>
Operations Chief – <b>Chief 2</b>	<b>Ladder 1</b>	
Shift Commander – <b>Battalion 1</b>		
Prime Mover – <b>Prime Mover</b>		
Engine Two Reserve – <b>Reserve 2</b> (when activated)		
Engine Three Reserve – <b>Reserve 3</b> (when activated)		
Reserve Shift Commander Veh. – <b>Battalion 2</b> (when activated as second command vehicle)		
Reserve Shift Commander Veh. – <b>Utility 1</b> (when activated as a utility vehicle to cut off water, etc.)		
All-Terrain Vehicle(s) – <b>ATV1</b> (EMS Cart @ Drill Field), <b>ATV 2</b> (Station #1)		

Note: When units take their first line piece of apparatus out-of-service and go in-service on a reserve unit, the unit designation will be the same as the first line apparatus. When reserve units are staffed under the department SWIFT plan as extra units in-service, the unit designation will be the reserve unit designation.

## WORKING FIRE/MAJOR INCIDENT NOTIFICATION PROTOCOL:

**Working Fire Defined:** A fire that requires the laying of hose lines from a fire hydrant by one or more companies. A working fire will usually have substantial fire and/or smoke showing as confirmed by the first arriving company.

**Major Incident Defined:** A major incident is defined as any incident of significant proportion which impacts the community or department in such a way that would require notification of other agencies or senior department members. Examples would include: EMS scenes with mass casualties, explosion in a structure, a significant weather event, and any scene that the media would determine to be of significant interest.

**Procedures-Working Fire:** The incident commander shall formally announce to Fire Alarm that a working fire is in progress and to initiate the working fire protocol. Example: "Battalion 1 to Fire Alarm, we have a working fire in progress, initiate the working fire protocol."

Fire Alarm will immediately begin notifying the following resources in the order listed:

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Alabama Power Company  
Alagasco  
Fire Chief (Chief 1)  
Chris Mullins

326-8001  
326-8320 or 1-800-292-4008  
Day, office: (205) 802-3837  
Cell: (205) 438-2796  
Home: (205) 329-3870

Emergency Operations (Chief 2)  
Stacey Cole

Day, office: (205) 802-3831  
Cell: (205) 438-2569  
Home: (205) 563-3926

Fire Marshal (Marshal 1)  
Leland Rhudy

Day, office: (205) 802-3832  
Cell: (205) 438-2778  
Home: (205) 353-3303

Safety Officer (Safety 1)  
David Kennedy

Day, office: (205) 802-3833  
Cell: (205) 438-2797  
Home: (205) 602-5550

Fire Alarm shall report to Command that the above task has been completed. Example: "Fire Alarm to <Street Name> Command... The working fire notifications have been made."

**Time On-the-Scene Report:** Fire Alarm shall report to the Incident Commander the elapsed time in 10 minute intervals beginning with the time that the first unit reported on-the-scene. This process will continue until such time as the fire is formally reported under control by the Incident Commander. Examples: "Fire Alarm to (Battalion 1) Overhill Command, units have been on the scene for 10 minutes," "Fire Alarm to (Battalion 1) Overhill Command, units have been on the scene for 20 minutes," etc.

**Weather Report:** Fire Alarm shall give a weather report to the Incident Commander at the same time as giving the first 10 minute on-the-scene report. This report will only be required for the first 10 minute report. The report will include: temperature, humidity, wind speed, and wind direction.

**Procedures-Major Incident:** The Incident Commander shall formally request Fire Alarm to notify senior staff personnel that there is a major incident in progress. Fire Alarm will notify the above listed **Fire Department Personnel** and give a brief description of the incident and the incident location to each.

Fire Alarm will report back to the Incident Commander that notifications have been made and that the senior staff personnel are en route to the scene.